

care, TBI treatment, or other specialty care. I agree! That is why their proposal puzzles me. At a time of war, when we're trying to get quicker access to VA care for our OIF/OEF and service-disabled veterans, how does allowing an increase in the patient load help matters? Where is the sense of priority here? It is like we are trying to keep a ship afloat by pouring tons of water onto the deck. It doesn't make sense.

For those who think that simply providing more money permits VA to automatically increase its capacity to see new patients, think again. It takes time to hire quality medical personnel. It takes time to find space to accommodate additional medical appointments and patients. Since 2003 VA has been able to improve the amount of time it takes to schedule primary and specialty care appointments so that more than 94 percent of such appointments are scheduled within 30 days of the veteran's desired date. Why would we risk longer waiting times for our OIF/OEF veterans and service-disabled veterans?

Furthermore, is this new spending fiscally prudent at a time when VA budgets have been growing at double-digit rates? There are 24 million veterans in the United States; only 5.3 million use VA health care now. Have the longterm cost implications of opening the system to all veterans been considered in this budget? Have we contemplated the multibillion dollar unfunded liability we are creating here if millions more Priority 8 veterans show up for free care?

Let me move on to another area that concerns me.

The chairman of the Budget Committee made it a point to show how his budget meets or exceeds the recommendations of the independent budget. That is all well and good, but when the IB is used to set budget policy for the Congress, then a fair evaluation of the budget numbers is in order. Let's look at one account in particular—general operating expenses. The Budget Committee chairman quite proudly stated that his budget meets the IB recommendation of \$2.23 billion for this account.

The largest portion of this account funds the administration of VA's benefits programs, to include its backlogged claims processing system. The administration has submitted a proposal that would provide VBA with the highest number of claims processors in its history. In fact, the President's budget will result in what will have been a 61 percent increase in claims processing staff since 1997. While I support the President's budget, it is time we tried a new approach to fixing the backlog of disability claims. Simply providing more and more money to fix the problem does not solve the problem.

What do we have with the Democrats' budget? On top of the President's

record increase, the IB recommends an extra \$700 million: roughly \$100 million for new information technology spending, and \$600 million for additional staff. According to unofficial VA estimates, 600 million would buy over 10,000 VBA employees, almost double the size of the existing bureaucracy? VA cannot accommodate a staffing influx of this size in 1 year. It would have to lease hundreds of thousands of square feet and additional facilities all over the country. More money would be needed for communication services, utilities, personal computers and IT support staff.

Is this rational? Have the long-term costs been factored in? Was VA's ability to provide space for these employees factored in? Does the incoming workload command a bureaucracy of that enormous size? As ranking member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, I have not seen any data to substantiate a request of that magnitude. I have even asked the authors of the IB to justify the number, but have yet to receive a response.

We are not talking about chump change here. If an error was made by the IB, and I suspect one was, then we should fix it before it is perpetuated.

Let me conclude with this final observation. VA has been criticized in recent years for its very public budget gaffes. The General Accountability Office rightly condemned VA for "errors in estimation" and "inaccurate assumptions" that led to the VA funding shortfall of 2005. I would caution my colleagues that we, in this budget resolution, may be repeating those same mistakes by providing money that VA could not prudently spend. It may be politically expedient to reflexively throw more money at problems. But let's also not forget about our obligations to the American taxpayer.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CASEY. I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak therein for 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

GENOCIDE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2007

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise to speak about S. 888, the Genocide Accountability Act. It is a bipartisan bill I have introduced with Senator TOM COBURN of Oklahoma, Senator PATRICK LEAHY of Vermont, and Senator JOHN CORNYN of Texas.

This Genocide Accountability Act is the first legislation produced by the Judiciary Committee's new Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law, which I chair and Senator COBURN serves as ranking member.

I wish to thank organizations that have endorsed this act, including Afri-

ca Action, the American Jewish World Service, Amnesty International USA, the Armenian Assembly of America, the Armenian National Committee of America, the Genocide Intervention Network, Human Rights First, Human Rights Watch, Physicians for Human Rights, Refugees International, and the Save Darfur Coalition.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a letter from the organizations I have just mentioned supporting this legislation.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

MARCH 15, 2007.

Hon. RICHARD J. DURBIN,
Hon. TOM COBURN,
*Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law,
Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Wash-
ington, DC.*

DEAR CHAIRMAN DURBIN AND RANKING MEMBER COBURN: We write to express our strong support for the Genocide Accountability Act. We believe this legislation, a product of the Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law's inaugural hearing on genocide, is necessary in order to enable the United States to lead the world in bringing perpetrators of the most serious human rights crimes to justice. We look forward to its swift enactment into law.

Winston Churchill once remarked that the extermination of Jews in Europe was "a crime without a name." That inspired Raphael Lemkin to name it, and he then devoted his life to codifying the crime of genocide in international law. Lemkin's work culminated in the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The most serious human rights crime had a name, but since 1988, when the United States formally ratified the treaty, genocide has been a crime under U.S. law only in the narrowest of circumstances.

The Genocide Implementation Act (18 U.S.C. 1091), enacted in 1987 as a prerequisite to the United States becoming a party to the Genocide Convention, provides jurisdiction over the crime of genocide only in circumstances where the perpetrator is a U.S. citizen or the crime took place in the United States. Since the time that law was enacted, the world's pledge that it would "never again" tolerate mass slaughter has been mocked again and again—in Bosnia, in Rwanda and now in Darfur. As the violence in Darfur rages into its fifth year, the United States must do all it can to deter those who act with seeming impunity, including by removing any barriers to prosecution in this country of those responsible for genocide.

The Genocide Accountability Act would accomplish this by enabling the Department of Justice to prosecute foreign nationals suspected of genocide who are present in the United States. This is not merely a theoretical concern. The Justice Department has already identified individuals who may have participated in the Rwandan and Bosnian genocides and are currently living in the United States under false pretenses, but current law fails to provide jurisdiction to charge them with that crime.

Like the pirate and the slave trader, perpetrators of genocide are rightly considered to be the enemies of all mankind. The United States must not remain passive when those